

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-13 (Canceled).

Claim 14 (Currently amended): A process for the preparation of a steel surface for hot-dip galvanising in a zinc based molten bath, comprising the steps of:

cleaning the surface by electrocleaning, ultrasonic cleaning, or brush cleaning,
pickling the surface, and
applying a protective layer to the surface by immersion in a flux solution,
wherein the cleaning is performed to a level of less than 0.6 [[ug]] $\mu\text{g}/\text{cm}^2$ residual dirt, and the flux solution comprises a soluble bismuth compound.

Claim 15 (Previously presented): The process of claim 14, wherein the cleaning is performed by electrocleaning, whereby at least $25 \text{ C}/\text{dm}^2$ is passed through the steel surface.

Claim 16 (Previously presented): The process of claim 14, wherein the pickling is performed by electropickling, ultrasonic pickling, or ion exchange pickling using an Fe (III) chloride solution.

Claim 17 (Previously presented): The process of claim 14, wherein the soluble bismuth compound is an oxide, a chloride, or a hydroxychloride.

Claim 18 (Previously presented): The process of claim 14, wherein the flux is an aqueous solution comprising between 0.3 and 2 wt% of bismuth.

Claim 19 (Previously presented): The process of claim 14, wherein the flux solution further comprises at least 7 wt% of NH_4Cl .

Claim 20 (Previously presented): The process of claim 19, wherein the flux solution comprises between 8 and 12 wt% of NH_4Cl .

Claim 21 (Previously presented): The process of claim 19, wherein the flux solution further comprises between 15 and 35 wt% of ZnCl_2 .

Claim 22 (Currently amended): A process for single-dip galvanising of a steel surface using an aluminium containing molten zinc bath, comprising the steps of:

cleaning the surface by electrocleaning, ultrasonic cleaning, or brush cleaning,
pickling the surface,
applying a protective layer to the surface by immersion in a flux solution, and
galvanising the surface by single-dipping the surface in an aluminium containing molten zinc bath,

wherein the cleaning is performed to a level of less than $0.6 \text{ } [\mu\text{g}] \text{ } \mu\text{g}/\text{cm}^2$ residual dirt, and the flux solution comprises a soluble bismuth compound.

Claim 23 (Previously presented): The process of claim 22, wherein the aluminium containing zinc bath contains at least 0.15 wt% aluminium.

Claim 24 (Previously presented): The process of claim 22, wherein the aluminium containing zinc bath contains between 2 and 8 wt% aluminium.

Claim 25 (Previously presented): The process of claim 23, wherein the aluminium containing zinc bath is a Galfan bath.

Claim 26 (Previously presented): The process of claim 14, wherein the steel is in the form of a continuous product,

Claim 27 (Previously presented): The process of claim 22, wherein the steel is in the form of a continuous product.

Claim 28 (Previously presented): The process of claim 26, wherein the continuous product is steel wire, tube or plate.

Claim 29 (Previously presented): The process of claim 27, wherein the continuous product is steel wire, tube or plate.